

POPULATION CONTROL

Dr. Binnie Dunlop's Address to the Eugenics Society

AT the rooms of the Linnean Society, Burlington House, on October 29th, Dr. Binnie Dunlop read a paper entitled "Eugenics, Present and Future" to a members' meeting of the *Eugenics Society*. Sir Humphry Rolleston, President of the *Eugenics Society*, was in the chair.

If, said Dr. Dunlop, in a population or in a section of a population, no woman had more than two confinements, that population or that section of the population would decline in numbers. This fact showed that eugenicists could advocate moderate policies. For example, if it were indeed the case that voluntary sterilization could not become widely available without an Act of Parliament, all that was needed in the long run for eugenics was that the operation should be made legal for any person with two children.

It was doubtful, however, if sterilization would become more popular than the usual contraceptive methods and thus appreciably hasten the decline of the relatively high birth-rate of the poorest third of the population. But this birth-rate—and the serious rate of racial deterioration which it implied, although there were many eugenic couples in this section—would fall rapidly if artificial abortion were made legal for any woman with two children. This, or a bigger reform of the law of abortion, would certainly be enforced by public opinion within twenty years, and thereafter the natality of the poorest third would fall quickly. But even if it did fall below the replacement birth-rate level, as was needed, would it remain below that level? Doubt arose, first, because this complete birth control would ultimately eliminate poverty, gross degeneracy, and the stocks whose women dreaded child-birth or were not philoprogenitive—in other words, would ultimately make all rich enough, fit enough and willing enough to have three or more children; secondly, because the

majority of couples desired at least one child of each sex, which brought more than two children into many homes; and thirdly, because the proportion of Roman Catholics in the poorest section would presumably have increased greatly. In view of these three factors we should not expect much from eugenic education or, if the social system continued to be a capitalistic one, from the poorest couples having very small families in order to approximate their standard of living to that of the richer couples. Therefore it would seem that legislation would ultimately be needed to ensure the maintenance of eugenic selection and a high standard of living, more especially if socialism came. So why, asked the speaker, not have legislation now?

The fact given at the outset suggested two legislative possibilities—based on making voluntary sterilization and abortion available to any person with two children. Firstly, there might be a law that no woman should have more than two confinements without an official permit—granted, say, by a local population committee and a national one. It could be enforced if a strong majority of the voters so wished, and it would enable the State to control the quantity and the quality of the population. Secondly, there might be a law forbidding any woman in the poorest third of the nation to have more than two confinements. It would fix attention upon what is and always will be, whatever the social system, the fundamental eugenic need; it would ensure a very high standard of living for all; it would show other countries the way to prosperity and race improvement; and it would be a fitting answer to the *Casti Connubii* encyclical of January 1931, which enjoined Roman Catholics to obstruct the birth-control means and eugenic doctrines whereby man can improve his standard of living and the quality of his race. It would be an injustice to the genetically well-

endowed couples in the poorest third, but the children in these cases would rise into the higher sections.

The two ideas might well be combined thus: No woman in the poorest third (or, under socialism, in the lowest grades) of the nation should be allowed to have more than two confinements, and no woman in the

other sections (or grades) should have more than two confinements without an official permit. Whatever the social system might be, said Dr. Dunlop, conditions essential for the maintenance of a high standard of living were a low birth-rate, eugenic selection, and a self-regarding incentive to effort.



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